

# CLOSE UP

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## AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

This will be more or less a brief account of what is happening in Berlin at the moment, actually or about to happen. Perhaps the most important thing is *Derussa*. The Russian film, certainly. But in addition there is a great amount of activity and life for the "off-season". Pabst is about to make Wedekin's *Box of Pandora*, and is (as I write) held up only by not being able to find a suitable leading lady. Having interviewed over six hundred applicants, and tested many of them, he is by now sending cables to America. By the time this appears no doubt somebody will have been chosen, and production will be in progress. Eisenstein is expected early in August to make for *Derussa* in Berlin a non-political film. Pudowkin is making a third, the first stills from which were shown to me by Prometheus Film G.m.b.H. As they were the first, I was unable to cajole any, but I shall have some in due course. They were full of vigor and beauty, and I want *Close Up* readers to see as many as I can print.

I am interested, too, to hear that nearly everybody here says *The End of St. Petersburg* is much better than *Ten Days That Stunned the World*. I will not dispute this, being but one among critics as good and better than myself, but, having seen the two, I think there is little to choose between them. Here they saw *St. Petersburg* first, and naturally accepted it as the masterpiece it is. I myself saw *Ten Days* first, and perhaps that has something to do with my feeling that the scenes of the revolt were more dynamic, more stark, more vivid than in *St. Petersburg*, though I am sure that nothing could be greater or more terrible than the war scenes in the latter, blending and commenting on civil life in St. Petersburg itself. *Ten Days*, they say, is a document—meaning news reel. So, if we are to believe it, is *St. Petersburg*. The personal element simply concentrates attention and sympathy on the individual. This is excellent, and adds great power to the film. But what of the personal element in *Ten Days*? What of Lenin and his terribly effective entrance and his wild gesticulations? What of the woman whose body lies on the great bridge, which, opening slowly, lifts her streaming hair, and takes with it a dead horse harnessed to its cab, with the horse dangling white and stark over the water, and the cab balancing its weight on the other side? This moment, with the bridge rising, and the horse rising higher and higher in the air, hanging more and more absurdly from incredible height, until the strain is too great and cab crashes down the slope to the road and the horse plunges into the water, is one of sheerest personal terror, and only to be compared with the toppling of the upright pram down the steps in *Potemkin*.

I want to register my opinion because, if I am any judge,



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*St. Petersburg* is *not* greater than *Potemkin*. I am sure it is as great, but not greater. Pudowkin is apt to err in presenting his ruling classes as caricatures. Their indifference and brutality is just a little apt to be over-stressed. Their position, naturally, was as often due to ignorance as great as the people they oppressed. I am not saying that Lebedeff was in any way overdrawn, nor the cheering crowds urging their countrymen to fight, while the whole of St. Petersburg decked in flags and flower garlands was reminiscent of a Roman festival. Women waving, and joy everywhere, we can all remember, was how war was greeted by many. But the impression, and this conveys exactly what I mean, of oppression was just as surely conveyed by Eisenstein in *Ten Days* by adroit photographs of gaudy chandeliers, statues, decor, gigantic, over-ornate trapping of the Winter Palace, contrasted with the pitiful misery of the people. This subtlety seemed to me very dignified and very fine. I know how many directors would have, or could have, visualised nothing but bare baccantes and a hiccoughing sovereign to express their meaning.

This may seem, but is not actually deviating from my account of what is happening in Berlin at the moment. These two films are still being much discussed, and will be for years to come. *Close Up* will have much to say of them from time to time. The cutting out of Trotsky from *Ten Days*, an act of censorship, is as inexplicable as most of the inhibitions for which that department is universally famous, especially since we have Lenin. Presumably we are supposed to realise that Trotsky figured in the history of these days, and to have every reference to him deleted leaves a gap. It is a pity that political

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reasons of to-day should in a case like this be allowed to misrepresent history.

*Potemkin*, on the other hand, has been going the rounds in its uncut version; that is to say, with the inclusion of the formerly banned scenes of the drowning officers, the raising of the red flag, and the toppling pram. Meisel's music, with this, have made the presentation more than noteworthy. And speaking of Meisel, *Berlin* has been playing at the Tauentzien Palast to crowded audiences. Meisel's gorgeous music again exhilarates. Perhaps there are too many trams in *Berlin*. At least, it has been stated so. Is it not, however, purely a question of temperament? If you watch *Berlin* objectively it may lack much that individuals would claim to be part of daily life in a great city. If its images are allowed to pass subjectively before your eyes, it does not lack hypnotic force, and carries all the movement and clatter of the streets.

*Anna Karenina*, with Greta Garbo and John Gilbert, is having a huge success at the Gloria Palast. As this is the rottenest possible film, it is clear that its success is due to the beauty of Greta Garbo, who has a Belle Bennett part of mother love. In twenty years they will be trying vainly to give her those parts for which her youth and beauty now make her suited. As I say, the film is just tripe, and Greta's clothes an abomination. If ever bad taste plus vulgarity and tawdriness meant anything they would here, but for the fact of Greta's loveliness and utter inability to look like anything but an overgrown adolescent dressing up for a school play.

*Kleinstadtsünder*, with Asta Nielsen, has been on at one of the Ufa houses, and revivals, notes on which will be found in Comment and Review, at various houses.



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*Derussa* have very kindly shown me some of the best films I have yet seen. I am to see more this coming week, so cannot comment on them in this issue, though I will in the next, so will limit myself to two as yet unreleased films, *Der Sohn* (*The Son*) and *Das Dorf der Sünde* (*The Village of Sin*). The latter, made by a woman director, Olga Preobrashenskaja, is non-political, but sociological, and (partly because I prefer sociology to politics) gives me almost greater delight than any of the others. I want you to remember the name, because it is without question a film that could and should be shown everywhere. I shall hope to give stills next month, and full information about it, and will content myself now by saying only that here is a film that every woman and every thoughtful man will acclaim. It states the case for women, for children, for decent laws and decent education as only a woman could have done it. Beyond this, Olga Preobrashenskaja has great power and poetry. Her exteriors, taken on panchromatic stock, have never been equalled. Here is peasant life, and here is corn. Corn blowing, waving, she has it from every angle, near and far. It is a great ethereal sea, with crisp, swift waves. Its beauty is indescribable. Her technique is strong, her types well chosen and never over-emphasised. I do hope that *Close Up* readers will have the opportunity to see this film.

*Der Sohn*, with Anna Sten, is less good, but still a remarkable and beautiful film. Anna Sten has never been so good. The story is intellectual, and intellectually conceived and intellectually directed. We will have more to say of this also, but space for the moment forbids. *Der Gelbe Pass* is also not so good. It has moments of great beauty, and J.



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Kowal-Samborski is most attractive in his role of the young peasant. But it is over-melodramatic. Its propaganda fails because the oppressors in this case are simply pathological cases, and would be in any circumstances or conditions. Surely a wealthy land-owner, requested for land to farm from two of his serfs, would be enough of a business man to say to himself here are two strong, capable and enthusiastic young people. They will do good work with their land, and I will have good rent. Instead of which he reluctantly rents them barren soil full of stones. That is what I call bad technique. We do not feel that this man is much more than a fool, certainly not worthy of the propaganda made against him. In the beginning, also, Marie (Anna Sten) was seen definitely employed in the fields, and Jacob (Kowal-Samborski), returning from military service, was greeted by all his fellow peasants. If these two were so well known, it would not have been difficult for them to find employment in the fields again instead of Marie having to go as nurse to the house of the land-owner miles away. There were lovely moments between the young wife and her husband, and the interiors of the brothel were straight, strong and unsentimental. But this is less good than some of the other films. It is not marked with the same intellectuality and freedom from conventional dramatic impasse as are the others. That is the enthralling thing about such films as *Mother*, *Das Dorf Der Sünde*, *Ten Days*. There is none of the old tired-to-death plot and counter-plot of the average scenario. One could not say quite the same of such Russian films (distinguished more for their treatment) as *Ivan the Terrible*, *The Postmaster*, and that other barren example of boredom, *Taras Bulba*; or even of

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*Der Sohn der Berge (Son of the Hills)*. These have the old tricks, the old jig-saw business of mate and checkmate, and are not to be ranked among the best, among *Bett und Sofa*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Das Dorf der Sünde*. These have such a new approach that they are, in a sense, a regeneration of the films. Let us hope that the Russian endeavour to secure an international market for its films will not mean deterioration. One or two recent ones have shown a much weaker tendency. Not all, however, thank goodness.

What a vast pity it is that Britishers, quite justly famed for their sense of fair play, should have refused to listen to "the other side" of the question. The English public would be the first to appreciate and give fair judgment to such films as *Ten Days*, and also to take their chance to realise that Russia really is building magnificently, and that the Revolution was not canaille ousting their betters, but bitterly oppressed and wronged people making a final, desperate bid for life.

Well, these are the questions, the problems, and the movements of Berlin of the moment. Next month I will give more details of the beginning of the autumn season. With Pudowkin, Eisenstein, Room, Pabst and other distinguished directors making or about to make new films, there will be plenty to occupy our interest for some months to come. The new season may be more rewarding than the last.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.



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By RICHARD WATTS, Jr.

To an American cinema season that threatened to be singularly arid and unprofitable, the European producers have come gallantly to the rescue. It is only fair to add, lest this summary sound like just another anti-Hollywood blast, that the rescue did come as something of a surprise. During the last season or two the so-called "art theaters" of New York have been showing us pompously heralded examples of the European photoplay which—with the exception of *Czar Ivan the Terrible*—have seemed so crude and amateurish in workmanship, beside even the most routine of the local product, that the pictures made abroad had come into pretty general disrepute.

Certainly, though, the Hollywood output of the last six months, despite a certain standard of technical proficiency, has been a discouraging one, even to the most generous and optimistic of observers. A frantic desire to imitate has become the one notable tendency in American film-making. A constant succession of crook pictures, nightclub melodramas, mystery dramas and romances about shopgirls who married the millionaire has been our weekly screen fare because some firm or other had once turned out a successful crook picture, nightclub melodrama, mystery drama or



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romance about a shopgirl who married the millionaire. No imagination, no originality, no resource and a more and more complete reliance on the support of elaborate accompanying stage shows to bring in the customers! Now comes the talking picture as the latest fad, and there are some observers who welcome even this surrender of the first principle of the screen as at least a temporary relief from the dreariness of the same three or four stories endlessly repeated.

All of this is, of course, a commonplace of American cinema criticism, but it is necessary to repeat it to suggest the proper background for the earlier mentioned rescue. For into the dullness and general uneventfulness of the most discouraging of screen seasons there was—though not quite suddenly—tossed a Russian picture and a British picture, and, immediately, the photoplay situation took on new life and eagerness. Now, it was not so surprising to find a Russian production an invigorating influence, but to see an English film also acting as pulmotor is surprising enough to deserve comment.

The picture is, of course, that Herbert Wilcox production called *Dawn*, which deals with the wartime activities and execution of the nurse, Edith Cavell. In my opinion, *Dawn* is an interesting work because it tells a straightforward story straightforwardly, is beautifully acted by Sybil Thorndike, and, dealing with a theme still full of dynamite, it was thoroughly impartial and honourable in its treatment. But no one could say it was really important as a piece of cinema-making.

What made it of importance to New York's photoplay season was its controversial angle. Because the film dealt

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with the subject it did and had been banned in the country of its manufacture, the feeling was widespread that it would reawaken national hatreds, and something of a local publicity war waged over the propriety of showing it. The point I would make is that the very fact a motion picture could stir up the controversy *Dawn* created was of high value to the cinema season. One of the chief defects of our motion pictures is that they are determined to offend no one; to deal with no idea or theme worth taking seriously. One of their chief weaknesses is that no one ever gets excited enough to take them with much earnestness. But here was a photoplay that caused people to become indignant enough to want to fight a little. For the moment, a motion picture actually started a battle. You can't tell me that doesn't come under the head of progress.

Of infinitely more importance, of course, as pure cinema, is the Russian film, *The End of St. Petersburg*, which reached town the evening after *Dawn*, and would have been shown earlier had not the State Department been somewhat in doubt about the whole matter. It will not be the purpose of this survey to tell of the magnificent cinematic values of this pictorial account of the overthrow of Russia's old regime; of its magnificent war scenes, the only real anti-war episodes in picture history; of its amazing use of shots of inanimate objects; of its skill in making every scene count. I will only say that the film served a purpose that was of high value in two directions. First, the highly charged subject matter of the film, with its frank anti-capitalist propaganda, attracted wide attention and discussion, and then, the attention having been drawn, it was riveted by the qualities of a film that



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combined the technical values of *Potemkin* with the additional element of being a good "show".

One result of this was that a week after *The End of St. Petersburg* opened, not only were all the motion picture critics writing enthusiastically about it, but their more valued colleagues, the dramatic critics, were talking excitedly of the film also. Accustomed to sneering the usual theater-goer's sneer at the contemptible object they call the movies, these somewhat condescending gentlemen remained to marvel at the dramatic possibilities of this humble medium. American defenders of the cinema are constantly met by this attitude of contempt that their cultured fellow-countrymen bear towards the cinema, and a picture like *The End of St. Petersburg* is, therefore, of infinite value in overthrowing this destructively cynical point of view. Add to that the importance of the work in restoring the morale of the unfortunate film advocates, beaten down after a succession of fourth-rate pictures, and you may gain some faint idea of what the Russian production has already done for us here.

As for the recent American-made photoplays, only two are worthy of consideration, and one of these was directed by a German. This is *The Man Who Laughs*, a surprisingly faithful adaptation of the Hugo novel, directed with fine atmospheric effectiveness by Paul Leni and splendidly acted by Conrad Veidt and Olga Baclanova. The other is *The Big Noise*, a humble enough program picture which was given a certain, at least, local importance by the fact that it actually satirized American political conditions and even had the irreverence to poke fun at New York's mayor.



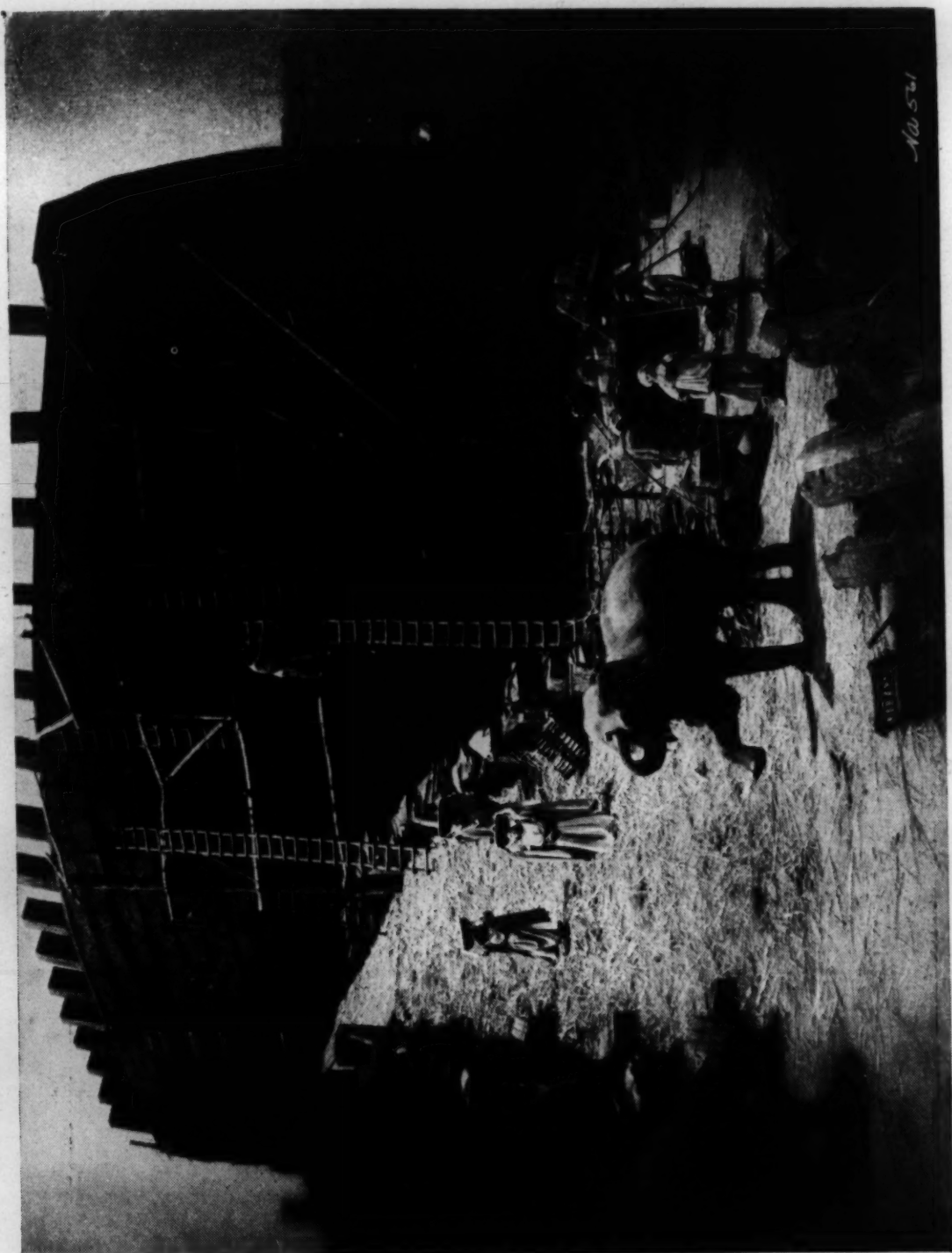
## FILMS FOR CHILDREN

For the first time in questions of cinematography, I am afraid. I have often been angry, but as Miss Loos has said, "you can't keep a good film down"—*Joyless Street* is being revived, *Jeanne Ney* was cheered in London, and quite a lot of people here walked out on *Rin-tin-tin*. But one cannot pick up a trade paper in any language without finding that a lot of societies of health, education and moral welfare have got together to discuss exactly what films they will permit to be shown to the young.

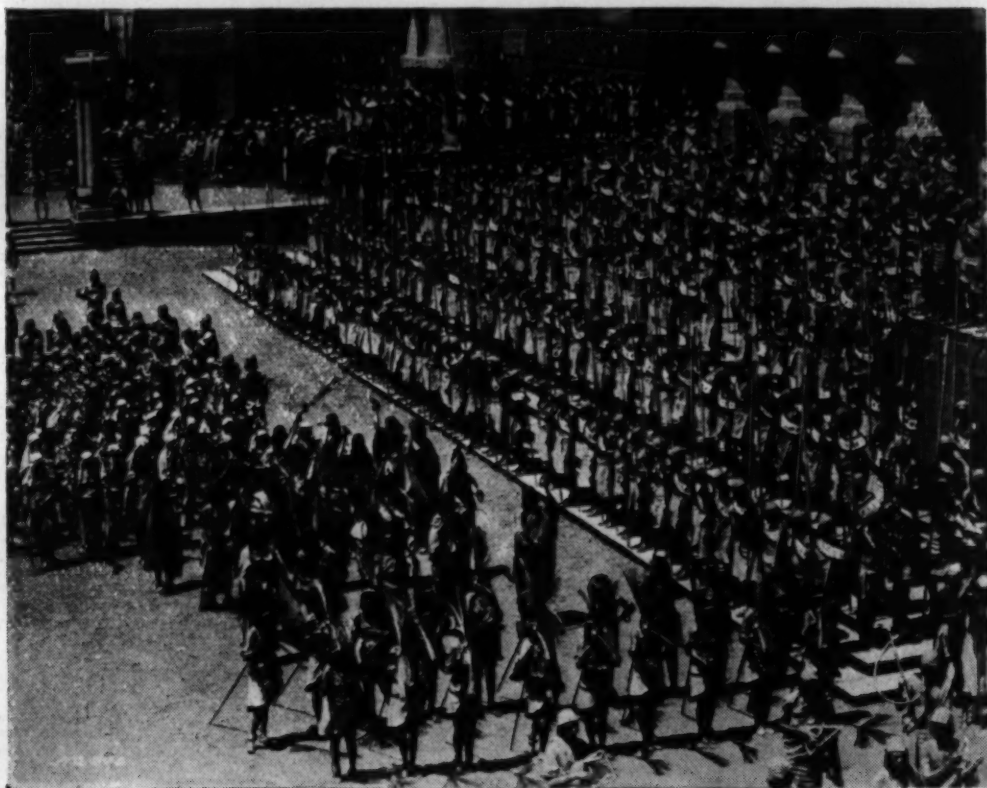
And one knows so well what they will choose.

A short time ago a film was shown here that was endorsed by all possible educational societies. Parents were enjoined, almost summoned to send their children. It was about the glories of scouting. And it was about as foolish a piece of work as any to date encountered. The hero, rather than break his word, allowed every other person in the film to risk their life and their happiness. But because he had not broken his word or his scout pole, or something equally dogmatic, he was a HERO. And children were to copy him. This is the kind of thing that makes me fear for the future.

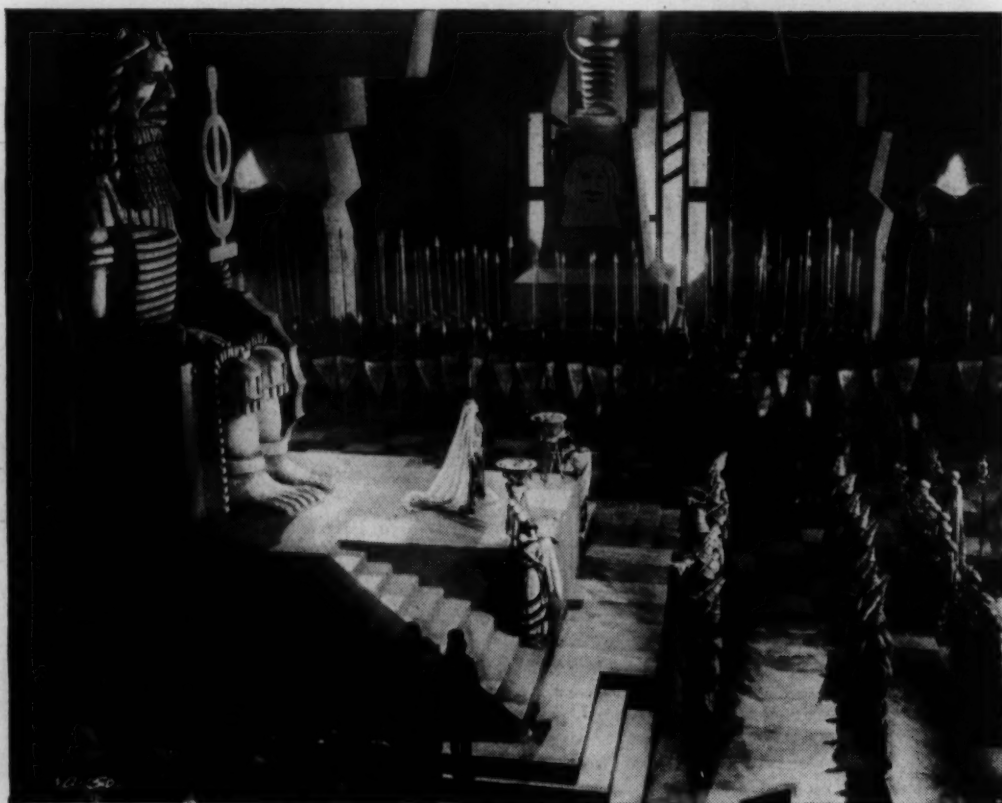
Children, naturally, are blindly obedient. What they need to be taught is self-reliance and discrimination. To know when a thing is right and when it isn't. There is no set road



The ark under construction—Noah (Paul McAllister) in foreground.



Exterior of Temple-palace Court during pagan festival preceding the deluge.



The moment that Miriam (Dolores Costello) is about to be slain by an arrow from the bow of the high priest, as a sacrifice to one of the temple idols.

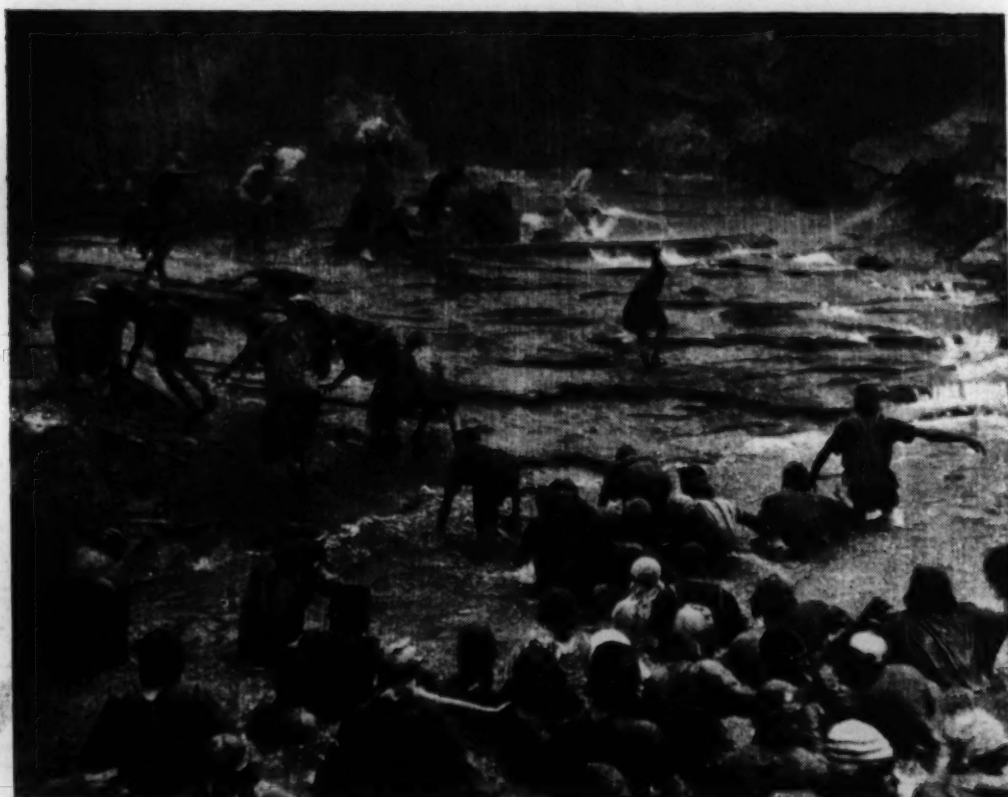




Noah (Paul McAllister) warning the idolators of the coming deluge.



Interior of pagan temple as flood waters pour in upon it.



Exterior scene of deluge.



Interior of Ark showing Japheth (George O'Brien) with Miriam (Dolores Costello) in his arms—Noah (Paul McAllister). Japheth has rescued Miriam from the deluge that overwhelmed the temple as she was about to be offered up as a sacrifice. Shem (Malcolm White) and Ham (Guinn Williams), together with their wives and





*The Tell-Tale Heart.* The madman (Otto Matiesen), driven to murderous frenzy by his victim's vulture-like eye and the beating of his terrified heart.



*The Tell-Tale Heart.* The old man awakens in terror as the madman appears in his room, bent upon killing him.



*The Tell-Tale Heart.* The madman (Otto Matiesen), after he has succeeded in clearing himself of suspicion, is driven to reveal his crime by the fancied beating of the heart of his murdered victim, whose body he had successfully concealed under the floor.





*The Last Moment*, with Otto Matiesen. The drowning actor's vision of himself in the role of Hamlet, receiving the plaudits of his audience. Note the psychological artistry in presenting the vision from backstage.



A group of some of the members of the recently organized Hollywood Association of Foreign Correspondents. (The one in the light suit, black tie and spectacles, in the foreground, at the left, is none other than yours sincerely—Clifford Howard.)

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of good and evil. Everything changes according to time and environment. The good of yesterday may be the evil of to-day.

Glancing at random over some American educational papers, I find that you may take your child to *Two Arabian Knights*, but you must not take him to *The King of Kings*. Why? *Sadie Thompson* is considered of "doubtful value," but you are especially cautioned against letting him see *Wings*. A pictorial record by a scientific expedition to New Guinea is not for the young. (Presumably on account of the customs of the savages!) *The Crowd* is strong and beyond them. *The Student Prince* is excellent. You may even, because it is so beautiful, take them to see Garbo and Gilbert in *Love*.

Probing behind the apparently incongruous listing, you will find that every picture that has the slightest relationship to reality is barred.

*The King of Kings* has passages of great beauty and simplicity, but because it presents the story without any particular dogmatic coloring, we presume, it is unfit for children. Though they will not be harmed by the vulgarities of *Two Arabian Knights*. (I felt, when I saw this, that though it did not much matter, it was one of the few pictures to which I should prefer not to take a child.) *The Student Prince* will show them life as it is not and therefore is quite safe, as the prince does his duty by his father and his fatherland in the end. *The Crowd*, which apparently (I have not seen it yet) sets out to show the average existence of the average family; is "too strong," and I cannot imagine why *Wings* should be so improper? Is it the war stuff? But



then they are taught to approve of war stuff in most schools. Has *Wings* some hidden meaning to which even a psychological student cannot penetrate? Or are they afraid that small boys may purloin aeroplanes to escape another term at school?

In Germany you may take your child to *Buster Keaton* or to *The Dangers of Ignorance*, and nothing much between.

In Switzerland you can take a child to anything provided it is accompanied by a parent: otherwise it cannot go alone until over fifteen unless it is labelled a programme de famille. This, incidentally, I feel is the ideal arrangement.

In England everything is censored in order to conform with what a certain group considers wholesome for children.

Now I am very doubtful if the cinema in any of its forms is responsible for much harm. It cannot be more harmful than the average daily Press nor the average education. Of course, there are a lot of films that one would prefer a child not to see; just as there are bad forms of any art that one prefers they should escape if possible. But I would run the risk of their seeing any film I know of to date, rather than that some absurd system of censorship should bar them from the films that matter—from *Mother*, from *Jeanne Ney*, and others in that category. But these would be the first to be barred under a policy of restriction.

Once a child is fourteen in mental age there is no reason why it should not see any film: particularly, if I could, I would see they went to films such as *Joyless Street* and *Bett und Sofa*. For children under fourteen care, if necessary, not from any point of view that their morals might be damaged, but because many great films treat of subjects outside their

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experience and many stupid films might blunt their discrimination.

But, as one should be constructive, not destructive, what films should be chosen to show children aged say, between eight and fourteen?

First of all, if I were arranging a programme for children, I should be careful to see that the films were not too long. They do not, as a rule, enjoy sitting still for longer than an hour and a half. Then I should suggest the following nine pictures, which shown, one a week, would roughly cover a school term. I should show one film only at each performance, with the addition of the current news gazette, or any one reel documentaire.

1. *Moana of the South Seas*.—This has proved, from personal experience, the favorite picture of a great number of children. If the programme is strictly educational, it can be linked up with the geography of the Pacific Islands. If possible, the fuller French version should be shown, as the more interesting portions for children were largely omitted from the English copy.
2. *Chang*.—This will add Siam and Asia to their map of the world. If possible, some of the interesting articles on how the picture was filmed (which have appeared in *Asia* and *National Geographic Magazine*) should be given them to read afterwards.
3. *The King of Kings*.—This film will give them more than hours of dogmatic religious instruction. It would be well to point out that the colored prologue and preposterous banquet are not in accordance with the verity of the rest of the picture.
4. *Tiergang in Abyssinien*.—This is a wonderful record of the expedition sent to Abyssinia to collect African animals for the Berlin Zoo, and has some very beautiful pictures of wild birds. But it is more than a mere documentaire and contains many scenes of Abyssinian life, one of the oldest cultures of Africa.
5. *Voyage Au Congo*.—Not so many animals, but very valuable to show children the beauty and interest of negro life in West Africa. Every country has its negro problem, and it will be well for all concerned if



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children realise that Africa is a land of complex civilisations and not a strip of sand where ignorant natives run from the white man in terror.

6. *Kraft und Schoenheit*.—This would need to be shortened. The scenes in the stadium, contrast of modern life, the training of tiny babies, the slow-motion pictures of boxing, fencing, ju-jitsu, etc., would probably be more enjoyed by children than the various forms of dancing. But I should not insult the intelligence and artistic sense of the children by cutting out the nudes.

7. *Under Arctic Skies*.—This gives a good idea of Northern life and links up, via Siberia, with Asia. *Nanook of the North* might be substituted, but I have always missed this picture. At any rate, the bears playing in the stream, the birds on the Siberian shore, will help the children to circle the world with their minds.

8. *Son of the Mountains*.—This is a Goskino film, taken in the Caucasus. The story is poor; it is, in fact, a Russian "Western," but probably the children won't object. The scenes of village life are excellent, and they will like the riding and the fighting. The chief reason, however, why this film is suggested is that most people link up Russia with the Arctic and forget completely the Asiatic and Mohammedan fringes, that suffer from intense heat rather than from cold. With this, as it is not very long, might be shown Cooper and Schoedsack's *Grass*, an interesting picture of tribal migration across the Persian mountains.

9. *Mother*.—Directed by Pudowkin. Perhaps the most religious film yet made. It is not revolutionary in spirit: it is *universal*. And it is absurd to deny a film of so great a vision to children simply because it happens to have been made in Russia. To do this is to place ourselves on the level of the women jeering at the prisoners in this picture.

I am afraid my list is very different to the current English experiments. Not one patriotic film and not one fairy tale. But, except for the *Voyage au Congo*, I have taken children to all the films I have suggested and noted their criticism and reactions. The adult world (perhaps from nervousness) too often surrounds childhood with falseness. These pictures will show it the world as it is—its beauty, its ugliness, its possibility of adventure.

BRYHER.



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### FILMS FOR CHILDREN

The failure of the theatre to provide for juveniles anything more than the annual Christmas pantomime, or *Blue Bird*, or *Peter Pan*, is presumably to be accounted for by the assumption that upper and middle class children are excluded from evening outings, except during holidays, and that in the long summer vacation they are away from town. But, as a matter of fact, few children are rigorously excluded for the whole of term-time from evening entertainments, and an adequate Juvenile Theatre could count upon a daily audience during the season, even if only a percentage of the available children paid each a single visit—and it is to be remembered that children are the best of advertising agents. Again, there is no reason why a summer holiday season should be less successful than that of the winter pantomime. For though most of the patrons are away for a part of the holiday, few are away for the whole of the six weeks, and all are in the privileged position of having earned relaxations.

But if it is strange that no one has yet risked the safe experiment of a Children's Theatre, it is far stranger that we have to date no Children's Cinema. For children of all classes and all ages go all the year round to the cinema. And if it is the truth that the trade fears to specialise, fears to do anything but cater all the time for a mixed house, then the

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waiting opportunity calls aloud to the enterprise of the amateur association.

Meanwhile educated adults discussing the desirability of films for children have fallen into three groups: the *pros*, the *contras*, and those who, regretfully accepting the fact that the film has bolted with humanity and is by no means to be restrained, urge on behalf of the juveniles a restriction to the severely instructional. Most educationalists who believe in the film come heavily to their support. Comparatively few consider its artistic possibilities. Amongst these few is conspicuous Mr. Hughes Mearns, who, in his interesting contribution to the *May Close Up*, demonstrated the use of the film as artistic experience, as a means by which children may be trained to discriminate, to detect the commonplace in style and in sentiment, to reach, for instance, the point of blushing with shame for a poet who offers them "the heart of a rose." His plea is, in fact, for the children's film regarded as an elevator of the taste of the rising generation.

Training in taste is incontestably an admirable ideal for those whose business it may be to select films for the use of schools—provided the children are not too overtly acquainted with the nature of the intended process. Much, if not everything, that the film can do is at stake the moment the onlookers are aware that they are being challenged to judge, and particularly is this the case with children of normal egocentricity and love of power. A large, perhaps the larger, part of "education" is unconscious, its vehicle a whole-hearted irresponsible collaborating enjoyment. In proof, let any adult recall his early experience and compare his response to those things that were presented to him with credentials



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from above with that called forth by what he discovered "accidentally" on his own account. To admit the superiority of the latter is not to attempt to decry systematised education. It is merely to note that even the best efforts of the accredited teacher cannot achieve the overwhelming influence of what offers itself without the taint of ulterior motive. Train up a child in . . . by all means, and the obligations of the school screen are inexorable to the limit of the term. But however psychologically enlightened our schools may become, however imbued with the spirit of free collaboration between teachers and taught, they will remain schools, training-grounds for youth that must recognise its state of pupillage. And there is that in every man which not only revolts against the state of pupillage but ceaselessly is outside it, is born adult and more than adult. And it is to this free persistent inner man that art in all its forms is addressed, that the art of the children's cinema will address itself and will do so freely only in circumstances allowing the children to feel themselves simply an audience in surroundings to which they innocently betake themselves for recreation and delight.

All over the world this young audience is now waiting in its millions, and there are almost no films available for it beyond those of its beloved Clown and his imitators. This audience may, and can and does, together with its elders, reap the many gifts offered by the film independently of what is represented. But its individual needs are ignored as they are in no other branch of contemporary art. There are, it is true, the films, many of them excellent, issued by the *British Instructional* for use outside the theatre. Most of these are directly instructional, some only incidentally so. Very many of them



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might serve as items in public programmes for children. Apart from these and the selection that might be made of the films already publicly exhibited, there is to hand no material wherewith to draw up programmes for children's shows.

It may not unreasonably be objected that the children themselves do not want children's shows, that a cinema for juveniles equipped with no matter what enticements would be tarred for the average child with the same brush as is every institution, educational or otherwise, supposed to be adapted to its needs, and that unless they were denied admission to other cinemas children would treat the newcomer with contemptuous neglect. Some of them would. Many would not. Most parents of cinema-visiting children would rally round the experiment. Those who doubt its final capture of the children may be invited to consider the case of the child amongst his favourite books. For the relationship between child and film finds its nearest parallel in that between child and picture-book. Children's films, in nearly all their desiderata, are akin to children's books, with the difference that the film, with its freedom from the restrictions of language, is more nearly universal than the book and can incorporate, for the benefit of the rest, the originality of each race unhampered by the veil of translation.

Apart from racial divergencies, films for children, like children's books, call for certain common characteristics. The child has ceased to be a born criminal, a subject for continuous repression and admonition, and is ceasing to be a toy adult, a person whose mind is a small blank sheet upon which the enterprising elder may inscribe what he will. Something of these he still is, but the something else, the

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unlimited opportunity he represents, overshadows the rest. And films for children are, as Mr. Mearns points out, the film's great opportunity. An opportunity that can be used to its utmost only by such films as may operate upon the child without need of adult intervention. Films are by their nature precluded from emulating those children's books, many of them excellent, which are intended to be read aloud and expounded. And the pull of the film is just here, in its unsupplemented directness, in the way it can secure collaboration in independence of the grown-up medium who may so easily, by the business of exposition carried too far, inhibit, or at least retard, in the child, the natural desire to explore on its own account. Interpretation should be, as far as possible, implicit. A good picture will tell its own story. The caption, at its utmost only the passing shadow of intervention, is usually indispensable, particularly for the instructional film, which at present is apt to be rather insufficiently captioned. Psychologists have quite justifiably protested in horror and dismay at the way the average "nature" film lends to the depicted natural processes an unnatural smooth swiftness and unreality that the child's lack of experience renders it unable to correct. Most of these films appear to have been devised merely to astonish, to give sensational exhibitions of "the wonders of nature." Inadequate captioning leaves these marvels to lie about in the child's mind unrelated to any kind of actuality. The chick emerging from its shell with the ease and swiftness of a conjuring trick is a well-known example of a method of presentation whose evil can be mitigated only by careful captional commentary.



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But, in the child's film proper, as distinct from the instructional film, captions should be reduced to the minimum and should remain impersonal, avoiding intrusion, running commentary, any kind of archness or the "roguery" so detested by children even while they politely respond to it, avoiding any steering of the onlooker's thoughts or emotions—everything but necessary statement or indication. The child's note is sincerity, and a steadiness that its immature physical and mental gestures fail, to its own vast annoyance, to convey. Only an immense steadiness through thick and thin, a complete serenity of presentation of no matter what, will secure its full collaboration.

Technically, just as its book should be clear in type and easy to read, its film should be clear, avoiding complications—though the child's passion for detail is not to be forgotten—unhurried, and not afraid of repetitions. Youthful eyesight is to be considered and the fact that children look chiefly at, and only very slightly through, what they see, only through within the limits of their small experience. Presentation should incline therefore to the primitive, avoiding highly elaborated technique. The late and deeply lamented "Felix" has revealed the enchanting possibilities of the drawn film. Let us pray that an artist may arise who will be moved to produce, with all the magic there is for children of five and of fifty in primitive drawing, film fantasies, grotesques, burlesques and what not.

The available subject matter for children's films is, of course, inexhaustible. World history, travel, adventure in all their guises and gradations, stories grave and gay. Satire is acceptable if quiet in tone and matter-of-fact. For the



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young child, dreams are inestimable treasure. To it, as to God, all things are possible. Its animism is normal and beneficent and at least as "true," regarded as interpretation, as the varying descriptions of the nature of existence that later take its place. It may be well in the case of elder children to anticipate the strange embarrassment awaiting them in the discovery of themselves as more or less central. But the young child's rose should be allowed to keep its heart. If you strike, it is not at the imagined heart of the rose, but at that of the child, who gave the rose its heart. Let it keep the magic garden, the dreams and fantasies and fairytales, to which eternally it belongs, together with the city of familiar life within which soon enough it must learn its place.

Most children, like most adults, object to being preached at. Yet direct moral teaching has its place, and what a priceless chance here has the film as against the moralising author, who must make his choice between fable, sly parable and sermon. Author, as preacher, is in a dangerous situation unless he be part artist and part saint. But the picture is impersonal. The children sit before it as ladies and gentlemen of the jury. Æsop and La Fontaine, remaining because they are works of art, offer admirable material. So does Strewelpeter, which contains the makings of enchanting grotesque moral films.

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON.

## THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF SOUND

BY WILBUR NEEDHAM

Those who listen with delight when the heroine actually shouts "Oh God! Not that! Anything but that!" will have no interest in this sketch. And those who hope, like the three Warner brothers, to make a fortune out of canned noise, will be ready for a major crime if they chance upon this. Let all such be warned: there will be no hope offered here for the "vitaphone"—indeed, this is not even a discussion of sound devices, except as a prelude to consideration of the photography of sound.

Possibly for that larger public without which American pictures cannot survive financially, motion pictures accompanied by metallic gasps and mechanical shrieks will monopolize the film theatre of the future. *Possibly*, I say, because by this costly addition to the picture, the movie magnates are actually narrowing their market to English-speaking races, destroying the universal language of the screen—unless they are willing always to make the vitaphone and the photoplay records separately, a method that will prove of staggering expense. And, as my friend Barnet Braverman points out, they are driving away many half dollars brought to the theatre by unhappy people who come to the films for

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oblivion, relaxation—or to sleep! It is not unreasonable to suppose that there may not even be a theatre in the near future (although the lure of the crowd ought to persist in bringing humans out of their homes), since broadcasting of talking-films by radio is not far ahead of us. But, however that may be, for the minority motion pictures will always be pantomime; and if the time arrives when we can no longer watch our pictures in silence—if we are to see the frightful day when a pantomime must also be an elocutionist—I know a growing audience that will quietly leave the film theatre, never to return.

But I am limiting the motion picture, denying it a logical development in its progress toward the complete absorption of all the other arts? But I am limiting nothing, denying nothing. If I have said elsewhere that the photoplay is a robber of the arts, I have not meant that it must devour them all, cast aside their empty husks, and remain itself alone, shining and supreme. The motion picture can take on the qualities of sculpture, painting, the stage, music, without conjuring itself into a mere versatile artistic parrot; it can strut the world stage well enough in borrowed—and transmuted—plumage and yet leave a few feathers to its elder sisters. Forgive the metaphors. Even with the addition of the human voice, the films can never hope entirely to supplant the stage. Lack of the voice has heretofore been regarded as the motion picture's only limitation and the one thing (aside from color, which the films already use with moderate success) whereby the stage asserts its right to life; but presence of the voice in reality imposes a limitation on the screen. Pantomime remains real only as long as it is pantomime. Echoing from



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photographs upon a screen in which the actors have reality only by their silence, the human voice shatters that reality.

Beyond that . . . the films already have their voice : have always had it. Perhaps few have consciously realized it, even among little theatre audiences. It is probable, too, that not more than a dozen directors have known that they were using sounds in their silent screen work ; but in all the better work, and in spots throughout the lesser films, the human voice has been speaking, the sounds of life have been caught by the screen and carried to the sensitive in audiences. The thing is so obvious that it seems I must be uttering platitudes in asserting it. But I have asked many intelligent men and women, and few of them have admitted that they hear what I hear.

The gong in *Metropolis*. A mere gong, banging away, is nothing. One acknowledges that there is a noise, but one does not feel it as one feels the boom of that gong alarming the workers. You have to feel noise, as you taste color, hear sights, and see feeling. It rests upon an interchange of senses. Only the hyper-sensitive realize this fully ; but in men of any feeling at all, the talent is ready to assert itself in varying degrees, when brought forth by an understanding hand upon the camera. In *Metropolis*, the effect was achieved by Fritz Lang—and I am sure consciously—by swinging the hammer toward the audience. As the hammer struck the gong, a booming sound was born, and this was at once carried into the theatre by the enlarging of the hammer as it swung nearer the camera. Soon the ears of the sensitive were filled with a swelling volume of sound.

In the same way, all the sounds of life can be made audible.

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Motion is not enough. A man walking across the screen is only a man walking; a photograph of his feet moving is no more than that. But catch his footfalls with the proper shade of emphasis, and the screen reproduces the sound and sends it winging out to the mental ears of the audience. These same footfalls can be muted, too. A dog barks silently until you level the camera at him from his own height, and catch the sound at an angle—a different angle for each tone, low for a bark, high for a howl, straight in the dog's face for a snarl. You will remember—how could anyone forget?—the howling of the sledge dogs at the end of *Nanook of the North*. Flaherty sent chills down my spine with that; and I have watched many dogs, and even wolves, howl upon the screen and have remained indifferent.

So with the human voice. Two actors bellowing at each other produce only a jarring noise, or what is worse, a rapid movement of lips without sound; but when their words are photographed with delicate shades of emphasis, the spectator hears every word, because he feels it all. In *What Price Glory*, Raoul Walsh achieved this effect sensationally, transferring stage dialogue to the screen with splendid skill.

Probably the wailing movies are necessary for the unimaginative. Still, even clods must tire, eventually, of this new toy; and what a gorgeous financial crash it is going to be for producers and exhibitors, with their costly investment in reproductive and broadcasting devices! The very men who would not risk a few thousands to experiment with new ideas in pictures have cast millions into the maw of this mechanical apparatus, with a future perilously doubtful.



If you are among those sensitive people whose mental ears catch the faintest sounds of life as a story is projected tellingly on the screen, you will not need the raucous howls of the talking films. Let us hope you will never have them thrust upon you.

## A JOKE BEHIND THE SCENES

O. B.

"But," they say, "how interesting for you. So many amusing things must happen behind the scenes."

It is vain to tell them that famous comedians do not fall off ladders in between scenes just to amuse the studio staff, in fact, the studio staff is generally coerced into doubling for famous comedians when the script calls on them to fall off ladders. Why watching the wheels go round should be an hilarious occupation, I don't know. Fascinating, certainly. Yet they insist that life behind the scenes is a mixture of occasional thrill and perpetual laughter. Except, of course, the younger ones, who say: "Oh! how wonderful! You have met Mr. X or Miss Y, and are they really so divine?"

If a brother artist acquires too generous a figure for juvenile parts, that is an irresistible behind-the-scenes jest; and a brother technician cannot stop chuckling when he remembers that the other chap is only getting half the salary! Customary manifestations of ambition, slightly gone to seed, and the



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universal love of scandal, which must be made at any cost; these are intimate little absurdities which cannot be flavoured by anyone not in the know. Esoteric witticisms about the mistakes and misfortunes of others. Poor old So-and-so, the wretched camera man, took such and such a scene with a cap on his lens! Little knots of stage hands gather in corners of the studio and repeat the story with appreciative roars of laughter.

We are simple folk and our humour is fittingly rudimentary, not at all the sort of thing that is fashioned for the delectation of outsiders; so to satisfy the curiosity of the many I have chosen some classical jokes of the cinema world.

First of all there are the memories of the early days of the industry. Incredible blunders, unbelievable gaucheries, fatuities! Memories which go back to the days when a camera was cranked by two niggers turning the wheels of a tandem!

Years and years ago, and this happened. A well-known figure in the artistic world was engaged to direct a picture. He talked a lot about composition and décor, and with a few pointed insinuations mortally offended the cameraman, who, in revenge, refused to allow him to look through the camera. Not till the middle of the picture did the director get a chance of seeing the set in the view finder. The cameraman was called away for a few minutes, and the director seized his opportunity, then, groaning in the true melodramatic manner, he paced up and down, uttering inartistic imprecations.

"You have done this on purpose. You want to ruin me. What is the matter? Why, the whole picture is upside down!"

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Another tale is more technical, but it deserves inclusion because it happened not so long ago. An actor standing at a writing desk was told to cross to the mantelpiece, take a cigarette, and walk back to the desk. The cameraman "paned" with the actor, but the stage manager was sitting outside the set busily drawing up his chart for the next day's "takes". When the picture was shown on the screen it was discovered that the cameraman had come off the set, for the white-coated figure of the stage manager was visible when the camera "paned" to the mantelpiece. It was an important scene in the picture, and the actor, who had finished his contract, was leaving for Germany. Nothing daunted, the ingenious cameraman took a ruler and scraped half the emulsion off the film! Everyone was content; some may even have thought it clever, an innovation, a new way of conveying an emotion.

There ought to be many strange incidents to record about the actors, and those pathetic beings who dream of being actors; but once in the studio they obey the megaphone and individualities (respectability, romance, sordidness) vanish in the crowd. I love, however, the legend of the lean director who was playing a hearty role in his own picture. He was a man of brusque disposition who rapped out orders to the actors, stepped into the set, ignored the warning signals of his staff, shot the scene, and nine times out of ten found that he had forgotten the pads to fill out his cheeks.

I am afraid that the following has been elaborated, embroidered and enriched, as it has been passed from mouth to mouth. Scene: an historical drama. Assistant director rushes from cottage (about to be burnt down to make a "high

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spot " in the picture) with a flaming torch, and sets alight to a gentleman wearing a property beard. "Keep still," yelled the cameraman, "if you've got to burn you might as well burn in the picture!"

My favourite is an Arabian adventure of a kind nonentity who took pity on two children. Flies had clustered round the children's mouth and eyes, and while the camera was being moved in for a close-up, he chased them away. Fury! The producer yelled: "Put those flies back at once. How in hell's name am I going to match up with the long shot?"

\* \* \*

A joke behind the scenes may not be a joke in an armchair. I feel that I should have said this at the beginning, but then you might not have read any further.

O. B.

## 100 PER CENT. CINEMA

(The Film Arts Guild, pioneers in the "little cinema movement" of America, whose series of presentations of foreign films as well as American films at the Cameo Theatre, New York, during 1926 and 1927, may be said to have formally launched the film art movement, has consummated plans for the erection of its own cinema in the Greenwich Village section of New York, which will be opened to the public during September, 1928.

Realizing that the art film, to grow to any influential



stature, must be not only individual in conception, form and content, but should be presented as well in a structure embodying a new type of architecture, and inspired by the fundamental necessities of pure cinema, Symon Gould, the director of the Film Arts Guild, has engaged Frederick Kiesler, of Vienna, Paris and New York, a noted architect and stage designer who was formerly identified with the International Theatre Exposition.

The Film Guild has given Mr. Kiesler full rein to conceive, plan and design both the exterior and the interior of the Film Guild Cinema as well as unique projection ideas invented by him. He has given the cinema and its individual needs intensive research and study since 1920. He has evolved a new science called "optophonetics", which is a radical treatment of color, sound and sight from the cinema standpoint. He pays special attention to what he terms "visual-acoustics", a screen which permits new methods of projection, a new scheme of atmospheric decorations of a chameleon-nature and other ideas which emphasize radically the quintessence of the cinema.

Mr. Kiesler embodies his suggestions and ideas in the following Cinema Manifesto :)

### THE CINEMA MANIFESTO.

We all know that our present-day cinema, or motion picture houses, are not cinemas, but merely imitations of old European theatres into which a screen was hung. But not all of us know that the Film has matured enough to create its own form of architecture, which must signify—100 per cent. Cinema.

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Our age is an *optical* age. The rapidity of events and their brief duration require a receiving apparatus which can register as speedily as possible. It is the Eye.

The speed of light waves exceeds that of all other waves.

The Film is the optical flying-machine of our era.

I will repeat what I published as early as 1922: The elementary difference between Cinema and Theatre consists in the fact that the Film is a play on a surface—the Theater a play in space.

This difference has not been realized concretely either in the Theater architecture nor in the Cinema architecture up to the present day.

I established an ideal project for the Theatre in "The Endless Theatre," in Paris, 1925. In contrast to it, I have now also adapted the Ideal Cinema to the American Building Laws, in New York, 1926.

While the ideal Theatre is dedicated to the Spoken Word, the ideal Cinema is "The House of Silence", "The Wordless House", or rather "The House of Sounding Vibrations".

The Theatre must give up the present "Peepshow form", which will pass over, in a purified state, to the Cinema as the ideal picture-theatre. This new form of the Cinema will give the most artistic and economical possibilities, much more than in any Cinema of to-day.

The constructivistic experiments in decoration of the Russians (Tairoff, Meyerhold and others), the futuristic attempts of the Italians, and the expressionistic work of the Germans (Jessner, Poelzig and others) have achieved no

results for the new Stage, nor for the new Architecture of the Theatre in general. They remained stuck fast in mere decoration, and after a brief existence of a few years they perished in the artistic reaction of 1926 to 1927.

While in the Theatre every single spectator is an atom of the mass of spectators and loses his individuality in order to be fused into complete unity with the actors, the Cinema which I have designed is the ideal house of the inactive spectator, of the passive spectator, of the individual spectator, the house of absolute Individuality.

The most important quality of the auditorium is, on the one hand, its power of suggesting concentration of attention. Even more important is its power of destroying the sensation of confinement which may be involved in the focal concentration of the spectator upon the screen. I mean that the Reflex which the film creates in the psyche of the spectator must make it possible for him to lose himself in imaginary, endless space, to feel himself alone in universal space, even though the projection surface, the screen, implies the opposite: All for one point, the SCREEN.

The architectural form of the ideal Cinema, contrary to the Theatre, must vary according to the size of the audience. Every capacity implies its corresponding elementary architectural form. A cinema for 300 spectators will have its special form (involving, of course, the size of the building ground), which will be essentially different from the form of a cinema for 1,000. The latter will differ from one designed for 2,000, this in turn from those designed for a capacity of 4,000, 6,000 and 10,000. Beyond 10,000 spectators, the architectural form will remain the same.



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The factor of next importance is Acoustics.

Mechanized music differs in its acoustic results from ordinary music. It has been proved that the Film cannot exist of itself. The " silent film " is a dead film, the film without music is exhausting, impossible for any length of time, especially the length of a whole evening.

The films are exhausting because they make all their demands on a single sense, the sense of sight. This is opposed to the laws of the human organism. Every one of the five senses must be supported by one of the others to attain its highest powers. *We see better while hearing, and we hear better while seeing. We must be able to see music, just as we must be able to hear a spectacle or a picture.*

For this reason there is a complete misunderstanding of elementary facts and artistic misconception in the complete refusal to accept the sounding-film or the color-film. One must not be misled by the absolutely unsatisfactory first attempts. Some day MUSIC, combined with COLOR and FILM, will be brought to a new perfect unity in a new art which I have named OPTOPHONETICS.

But as long as the film expresses itself in black and white, and because of the very lack of color, it is from the beginning not an imitation of nature, but a new form of artistic creation. But when the color-film reproduces merely a photograph, a copy of scenery, the cleavage between nature and art, between the spectator and nature, grows less; and so in a work of pure imitation, the artistic effect and every effect on the psyche of the spectator fails completely. All sense of illusion is lost, because the separation between nature and art is lacking.

In the Film, as in every other art, everything depends on

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*how* its mediums (means) are utilized and not on *what* is employed; and in the film of the future all depends on how the black-and-white-color and sound can be fused into an optophonetic union.

The attempts at speaking-films have failed completely in the cinema. Speaking is too ~~natural~~, too concretely a part of an individuality, to be changed from nature to abstract art. But singing, on the contrary, like instrumental music, will be employed as accompaniment to optical drama, for singing, the abstract form of speech, can at once be combined with the optical drama in the realm of art. The reproduction of speech, however, falls into the realm of the radiophone and of television—a transfer into space of the material of facts (news reels).

The acoustics and the general form of the cinema depend essentially on the establishment of these facts, as do the position of the orchestra, of the organ, and all related details.

There is no doubt whatever that the film is not a final goal, but a transition to a new art which I call OPTOPHONETICS. The house of Optophonetics, as the ideal cinema, is the OPTOPHON.

The problems which determined my plans and which have received an entirely original solution by me were :

1. The elementary difference between Theatre and Cinema-architecture.
2. The possibilities of utilizing film theatres when there is nothing on the screen.
3. The variety of architectural forms according to the capacity of the house.
4. The problem of handling the audience in the cinema (the traffic problem in the cinema).
5. Light-intermissions (continuous and discontinuous method of presentation).
6. The



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Auditorium (more seats and more comfort). 7. Decoration. 8. The ideal screen. 9. The ideal projection-box. 10. The new acoustics. 11. Musicians and mechanized music. 12. The color problem. 13. The foyer. 14. The entrance into the auditorium. 15. The ticket box. 16. The façade. 17. The entrance.

FREDERICK KIESLER.

## CECIL B. DE MILLE

New York, autumn, 1913. The particular day is immaterial. Two men are lingering over their lunch together, discussing plans for a new venture.

One of them, at thirty-three, is already a veteran soldier of fortune. He has been a newspaper reporter in San Francisco; a gold hunter in Alaska; a cornet player in a Honolulu orchestra; the manager for a prestidigitator in New York; and is now a vaudeville booking agent. The other, a year younger, the son of a dramatist and one-time college professor, is an actor in a New York stock company. He has also played in road shows; has sung in light opera; has managed a theatrical company; has written several plays; and has been an assistant producer, with David Belasco.

Each has worked hard to win a name for himself; but the big world has so far failed to recognise either of them. Instead, she has given both of them many rude bumps and



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much discouragement—a gloomy trick which fate now and again employs for the making of brilliant history.

This was fifteen years ago. The two young men whom niggardly fortune was that day prompting to seek a new outlet for their ambitions were Jesse Lasky and Cecil de Mille. They had heard of a little place in Southern California called Hollywood, where conditions were reported as ideal for making motion pictures. They would pool their experiences and their talents and what little capital they had between them, go out to the Coast, and try their luck with this pioneer enterprise.

It was a bold undertaking; with a touch, too, of defiance and rebellion in it. Especially for De Mille, the man of the stage, and steeped in the atmosphere of its classic traditions. For the cinema then was outside the pale of legitimacy. An Ishmaelite, unworthy of welcome or recognition. Crude, cheap, trivial, born of a toy, and without pedigree, it had no place among the chosen.

But with his gift of vision De Mille foresaw the possibilities of this little waif of the amusement world. Its present chief handicap was lack of opportunity. He saw in it a new form of dramatic art, as yet wholly uncertain of itself and groping for adequate expression. He would bring to it the teachings and experiences of his own historic profession; invest it with definition, life, beauty, meaning; endow it with the technique of the theatre; substitute its awkward presentations with genuine drama translated from the stage.

And so the modern photoplay was conceived, and a few months later had its birth in Hollywood with the production of *The Squaw Man*.

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Lacking sufficient funds between them to carry on the venture, De Mille and Lasky secured the financial partnership of Samuel Goldwyn, and these three, together with Dustin Farnum, the actor, constituted the original organisation. Others who were invited to come in and lend support to the infant enterprise shook their heads and tucked their pocket-books out of sight. What did De Mille and his associates know about making moving pictures? In truth, they knew nothing about it; nor would they have been any better equipped if they had known what little there was to know about it at that time. Quite frankly, they were adventurers, pioneers, experimenters, setting out to do something different, something new, something worth while; and a common faith in De Mille's vision and a trust in his native ability as a director inspired them with the assurance of success.

A few thousand dollars invested then in that faith and that trust would to-day be worth as many millions. And to-day there are individuals in Hollywood, thankful to earn a hundred a week, who were offered this opportunity, and who not only declined it, but, as one friend to another, also admonished De Mille against throwing away his future. Faith in Providence is common enough, but faith in man and events calls for inspired courage.

The history of the photoplay and its development are personified in De Mille—epitomised in his Hollywood career as director and producer. He began his work in an abandoned barn; its stalls serving as dressing rooms. He and Lasky, as well as the actors and the hired hands, walked to work each morning and brought their lunches with them in paper bags. The stage in the rear of the barn was open to the air



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and sunlight. The dependable California sun was then the one and only means of lighting a set. Strips of white cloth were hung on overhead wires and moved back and forth to secure a proper diffusion of light. The sets were built of compoboard or of canvas stretched on wooden frames. A shelf of books, a rose trellis, or any other desired bit of background was provided by a scene painter.

These primitive devices were not peculiar to the Lasky company. They represented the then common mode of picture making. And it was De Mille, brimming with ideas and calling on his extensive knowledge of the theatre, who instituted the first radical changes. It was he who introduced "practical" sets and properties—real, usable, substantially built walls, doors, windows, bookcases, stairways, pillars, fireplaces. And those who believe that the camera does not detect the difference between the semblance and the substance need only compare some of the early-day films with those of the present.

It was De Mille, too, who introduced artificial lighting, and thereby led the motion picture away from its primitive flat photography to true pictorial values. Here is the story of the genesis of this innovation, as told by De Mille himself in a lecture at Harvard University a year or two ago :

When we first went to California we used only sunlight. There was no artificial light employed at all. Having come from the stage, I was desirous of getting a certain effect in a picture I was making of *The Warrens of Virginia*. The particular scene was that of a spy coming through a curtain, and I wanted to light only half of his face. So I borrowed a spotlight from an old theatre in Los Angeles, and gave his face just a smash of light from one side, the other side going dark. I saw the effect on the screen and carried out that idea of lighting all through the rest of the picture—that is, a smash of light from one side or the other; a method that we now use constantly.



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When I sent the picture on to the sales department I received a most amazing telegram from the then head of the department, saying, "Have you gone mad? Do you expect us to be able to sell a picture for full price when you show only half of the man?" And the exhibitor, in his turn, offered the same protest—that the picture was no good because we showed only half of the man. So the sales department wired me again, "We don't know what to do; we can't sell the picture."

For a moment I was in despair. But, as I have already told you, it is the duty of a director to meet all emergencies. In this instance Allah was good to me and suggested the phrase "Rembrandt lighting." So I telegraphed the New York office: "If you fellows don't know Rembrandt lighting when you see it, don't blame me."

The sales department, greatly impressed, exclaimed, "Rembrandt lighting! What a sales argument!" On the strength of that they took the picture out and charged the exhibitor twice as much for it—because it had Rembrandt lighting.

And that is the origin of the present-day use of artificial lighting.

But while De Mille thus drew upon his experiences with the theatre for many of the technical innovations in picture making, he came in time to realise the limitations of stage technique in this new field. And while he was the first to give dramatic dignity to the screen by replacing its paltry, incoherent stories with plays taken from the stage, he soon learned, also, that the screen demanded its own stories and its own manner of presenting them.

Accordingly, while retaining all that was adaptable from the stage, he developed the art of photodramaturgy within its specialised field and in accordance with its individual requirements.

His experiments with the close-up, with color, with lighting, with camera effects, with stage settings, with various mechanical and optical devices, together with his many original ideas in scenario construction, to-day constitute the

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basis of much that enters into the craft of picture making and gives the screen its distinctive character and import.

Judged by his pictures, De Mille's rank as a director must be left to individual appraisal, as must that of any other director. Cinema standards are still too indefinite, and popular tastes too varied, to permit of any acceptable common ground for comparison. Relative values of accomplishment can only be intelligently determined in historical perspective, and the perspective of screen history is yet too short for such determination. The only practical criterion at present possible is that of success; and according to this, as measured in fame and fortune, together with a record of fifteen fruitful years without a failure, the rank of first place among cinema directors belongs unquestionably to Cecil de Mille.

The making of pictures is to him primarily what the writing of a book is to the novelist or the building of a bridge to an engineer—the joy of creative work. And its unparalleled diversity of scope, together with its never-ending problems and possibilities, has its especial appeal to a man of De Mille's temperament and serves as a constant challenge to his energies and resourcefulness.

Picture making embraces not only all fields of creative art, but it calls also for the balancing elements of business sagacity, for the skill of generalship, and for the experienced ability of the showman. And in each of these practical respects De Mille is as much the adept as he is in the realm of the imagination.

Moreover, he has not concerned himself with any attempted educating of the masses. He has left that for those afflicted with the missionary spirit. He realises, in agreement with

## CLOSE UP

Confucius, that you can guide the people, but you cannot enlighten them. He accepts them as he finds them, but with mind and energies ever alert to give guidance to their developing picture tastes and their self-created readiness to respond to advanced thought and more subtle forms of art presentation.

Of De Mille's fifty-three pictures, only two have been relatively lacking in popularity—*The Whispering Chorus* and *The Road to Yesterday*. The first, produced about ten years ago, is a sombre psychological study; and the latter, which was released in 1925, deals with the occult subject of reincarnation. Each of them was purposely experimental, a testing of the public's reaction to a theme of spiritual import treated with appropriate artistry.

Although they cleared a financial profit, these two pictures were more or less of a popular disappointment. Yet, artistically speaking, they are to be recorded among the best things De Mille has ever done. Particularly is this true of *The Road to Yesterday*. As an example of photodramatic craftsmanship it is singularly beautiful and significant. It serves to demonstrate what De Mille is truly capable of doing, and offers a glimpse of what we may expect from him when the Jacks and Mollies of the world, to whom his work is wisely dedicated, are prepared to accept and enjoy the higher reaches of cinema art.

CLIFFORD HOWARD.



## COMMENT AND REVIEW

All enquiries, subscriptions, business matters, may be addressed by English readers or by readers in England to the London office at 24, Devonshire Street, London, W.C.1. Editorial matter should be sent to Switzerland, however, and not to the London address. Will those whom it may concern kindly note this.

\* \* \*

The list of recommended films is again held over until the next issue on account of the summer vacation. Next month it will be amplified, and indications given for the autumn lists of the various companies. Also a list of films to be avoided, which has already been suggested by various readers.

\* \* \*

Berlin has just been rewarded by several revivals, numbering among them an early Lubitsch, in which Pola Negri, as an Arab girl in beads, is wooed by Harry Liedke in a sun helmet, and persecuted by Emil Jannings in a robe. Pola gives in the course of this presentation the world's most unsexuctive Eastern dance, weighed down by jet and chiffon. Harry Liedke is not so fat, and Jannings painted brown is reminiscent of the Duncan sisters' *Topsy and Eva*. Two



„Das Ende von St. Petersburg“

*Photo: Derussa*

A significantly powerful photograph of J. Tschuwileff as the country worker who comes to St. Petersburg, in Pudowkin's wonderful film *The End of St. Petersburg*.



Photo: Derussa

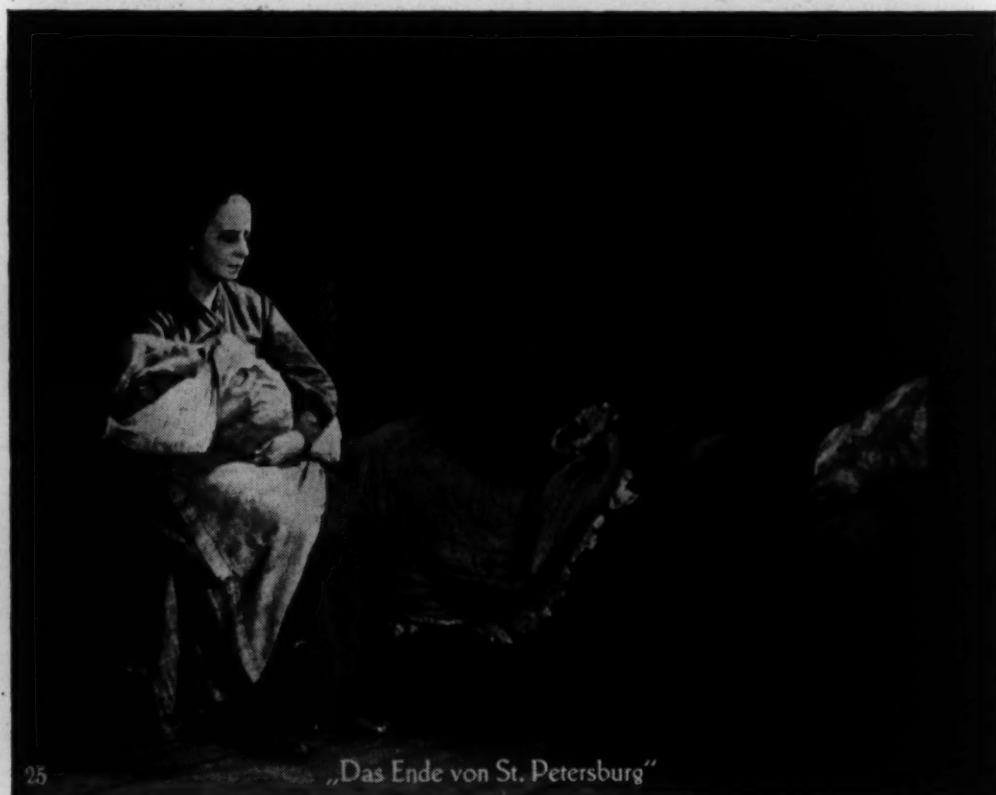
The worker is cast into prison. Tschuwileff, who is by profession an accountant, and had never before played in films, has caused such a sensation in *The End of St. Petersburg*, that it is expected he will take up film work as a career. Pabst has already booked him for his next film.





„Das Ende von St. Petersburg“

Lebedeff (W. Oblensky) is so emphatic in his control of the stock market, that he keeps his assistants busy picking up his office furnishings.



„Das Ende von St. Petersburg“

W. Baranowskaja again takes her opportunity to make her part unforgettable in beauty and in grief.

*Photos : Derussa*



„Das Ende von St. Petersburg“

6

Tschuwileff in Ledebef's private office. His incongruous and heavy stupidity are changed to fire and humanitarianism by contact with the suffering workers of the capital; perhaps most of all by his contact, hostile and understanding, with Baranowskaja as the Worker's wife.



„Das Ende von St. Petersburg“

Photos : Derussa

W. Baranowskaja, immortal for her performance in *Mother*, also by Pudowkin, of whom one can only inadequately say she is among the very few really great interpreters of real life to the screen.



Patriots in St. Petersburg are ecstatic at the nobility of their fellow countrymen. Here is one of them enjoying the sufferings of war.



*Photos : Derussa*

And here are the noble fellow countrymen, soon to become "rabble, fiends, and devils." War as war, and war as flag waving, and flower-decked guns are set side by side in this film with shattering contrast.





*The Yellow Passport (Der Gelbe Pass)* Anna Sten (standing by post) is caught in a park raid, and denounced as a prostitute.



*Photos : Derussa*  
 In the House. A more explicit, and swiftly drawn interior of a brothel has not yet been seen. The director of *The Yellow Passport* was F. Ozep, who also wrote the manuscript.



„Der gelbe Paß“

Photo: Derussa

Anna Sten as Marie, is presented with the Yellow Passport—the prostitutes' license. Being unable to read, she imagines it to be an ordinary passport, and is grateful to the court for passing her.



Photo : Derussa  
*Moscow that Laughs and Weeps (Moskau, wie es weint und lacht).* With Anna Sten, W. Vogel, and J. Kowal Samborski. The only modern Russian comedy to be sent abroad.



## CLOSE UP

potted palms and a cartload of sand are the Sahara, and it is interesting to note early use of the travelling camera, which recedes in front of Jannings' advancing and threatening figure. Pola is so rent by this harrowing spectacle she falls down dead. Herr Jannings stabs himself and Liedke rushes out into the night, while a final sub-title says "Too late, too late."

Next an early (and how!) Henny Porten. Could it really have been made in 1901? Henny's hair is like two bolsters, one perched one either temple. Her waist is 16 inches, and as she walks her skirt picks up and deposits all the dust of the vicinity. This is a strong drama with "fast scenes", and has an aged father and a lover she meets on street corners. Next a 1912 Asta Nielsen. This was perhaps the most rewarding of the three. Close ups and panning camera show film technique well on the move. Asta Nielsen is gorgeous, and even then was the Nielsen of to-day—a great actress, with subtle and extraordinary magnetism. Dressed as a small girl, getting in everybody's way, an overgrown hoyden in the toils of first love, this film, with its ample view of her beautifully thin legs (and all that thereon is), was certainly one of those which must have caused countless elderly persons to begin to say what they and their offspring have gone on saying ever since, "Those dreadful films. They are corrupting the youth of the whole world!" Its wildest abandon, needless to say, was positively ascetic in comparison with modern films of similar genre, but there it is. It was charming to see Asta Nielsen—then at the height of her youthful beauty—so integral, and sound, and convincing.

Other revivals have come from the early beginnings of

## CLOSE UP

cinematography, when emotions were registered like impromptu dumb charades. Sub-title: She is overcome with remorse. View of lady in plush chair with pompoms, and a palm on a stand. She jigs backward and forward, slapping herself heartily on the forehead and masticating her mouth as far in every direction as she can reach. Flings her hands heavenward. Rolls her eyes, and that is that. She sits there waiting for her next emotion.

Indeed, revivals seem to be the order of the day. Paris and Switzerland have shown a most entertaining series of news reels, entitled *Paris Twenty Years Ago*. The Tauentzien Palast gives sly insertions of hand-coloured fashions for ladies worn by the most restless mannequins it is possible to conceive. And dramas from the school of the dying child, where a large, fat and elderly female angel appears from a puff of smoke, and waddling to the bed, hoists up the departing spirit with considerable difficulty and again vanishes in a puff of smoke, while father is gambolling with loose women in the nearest house of ill repute.

These films are greeted with pure delight. The public love them, and they have, moreover, a real value. It occurred to the writer during one of them, for which a large, important voice was supplied to amplify the absurdity, that here was the logical effect that must come of the talkie. Scenes over prolonging themselves to the point of sheer meaninglessness while the characters speak their beastly lines. The talkie will be a matter of changing the film in order to suit the spoken matter. In other words, the film will play second fiddle to a noise you can have far more convincingly in the nearest Hippodrome.

## CLOSE UP

We think it will interest our readers to know that among the films which may be rented from Messrs. Wardour Ltd. for private showing (at two guineas) are the following :—

*Impetuous Youth* (Czinner),

*The Waltz Dream,*

*The Two Brothers,*

*Faust,*

*Wrath of the Gods,*

*Cinderella,*

*Secrets of the Soul,*

*Metropolis,*

*Prey of the Wind* (René Clair),

as well as many others, some of which, of course, are worthless for the student of cinematography.

## HOLLYWOOD NOTES

The disinclination on the part of American producers to import foreign films is being offset in increasing measure by the importing of foreign actors and directors. During the past several months many studio executives have visited Europe, and not one has returned without having contracted for further notable additions to Hollywood's already numerous foreign colony.

Typical of this situation is Samuel Goldwyn's recent acquisition of Lily Damita, whose work in German and Hungarian films has given her an international reputation.



## CLOSE UP

Pabst, Wiene and Curtiz are numbered among the notable directors of her European pictures, among which will be remembered *Red Hills*, *Coach No. 13*, *The Road to Happiness*, *The Queen Was in the Parlor*, *Butterfly on the Wheel*, *The Adventuress*, as well as others no less noteworthy.

Her first role in an American film will be that of Mrs. Travers in the screen adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *The Rescue*, to be directed by Herbert Brenon. Ronald Colman is cast as the star, in the character of Tom Lingard, while Theodore von Eltz will play the part of Carter. Others in the cast are Bernard Siegel, Duke Kahanamoku, the champion Hawaiian swimmer, and the distinguished Japanese actor, Sojin.

\* \* \*

Hollywood's present vogue of catering to international interest by employing foreign actors and directors in many of its leading productions is further strikingly exemplified by Goldwyn's forthcoming picture, *The Awakening*. Heading the cast are Vilma Banky, the Hungarian star, and Walter Byron, a former officer of the British Royal Fusiliers. The story is laid in Alsace-Lorraine. A troop of German Uhlans plays a prominent part in it; and with one exception (Capt. Richard Murphy, of the 2nd Field Artillery, United States Army), the principal characters of this troop are impersonated by foreign army officers. Six of them are former German Uhlans themselves, and the others include military representatives of England, Australia, Finland, Sweden, Austria and Russia. The Russian is General Wiatcheslav Savitsky, who for eighteen years was a member of the personal body-guard of the late Czar. During the War he commanded a

## CLOSE UP

cavalry division against the Germans, and now by a bizarre quirk of fate he appears in the role of an Uhlan officer.

\* \* \*

H. B. Warner, the English actor, who has only recently been afforded an opportunity to display in full measure his splendid talents and versatility, through the medium of *The King of Kings* and *Sorrell and Son*, is scheduled to play a leading role in Warner Brothers vitaphone production, *The Candle of the Wind*. Monte Blue will share stellar honors with him, and Michael Curtiz will direct the picture. A novel feature of the story is its antarctic locale; but that which will undoubtedly most appeal to admirers of Warner is the opportunity offered by the film to hear his voice on the screen.

Following this he will be starred in two pictures to be produced by a newly-formed Hollywood company, the Quality Corporation. The tentative titles of the pictures are *Drink* and *The Romance of a Rogue*.

\* \* \*

A celluloid version of Poe's morbid story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, is Hollywood's latest contribution to the collectanea of art films. It had its initial showing at the Filmarte Theatre, and received instant recognition as an opus of unusual character and craftsmanship—perhaps the most finished production of its kind that has yet come out of the Hollywood proper. The psychology of the story—the effect upon the madman of the beating of his victim's heart—presents a distinctly difficult problem for film translation; yet at the hand of Charles F. Klein, the translator and the creator of the picture,

## CLOSE UP

together with the admirable acting of Otto Mattiesen, the task has been accomplished with almost uncanny fidelity.

Klein has brought to the work not only a long European experience as a cameraman with such companies as Emelka and UFA, but also a rare versatility of artistic and technical abilities, coupled with native skill as a director. While much of the camera work on the picture is his own, he had the assistance of Leon Shamroy, the young Russian cameraman, whose notable work in *The Last Moment* definitely established him as one of the few real camera geniuses of Hollywood.

\* \* \*

Concrete evidence that the Hollywood producers are assured of the permanence of phono-films, or talking movies, is offered by the Fox Company in their recent construction of a five-hundred-thousand-dollar movietone film laboratory. In keeping with the present trend of studio architecture, the building is an artistic structure of Spanish *motif*. One of the leading engineers of the Eastman Kodak Company was employed to supervise its construction and the equipment of its various departments. Besides its departments for experimental work, chemical research, and movietone printing, the laboratory contains several projection rooms, a screen laboratory, a machine shop, twenty dark rooms and a number of offices.

\* \* \*

Following a number of pictures in which the vitaphone was used to a greater or less extent, the Warner Brothers have now produced a film which is equipped from beginning to end with their sound device. The title of the picture, credit



## CLOSE UP

titles, the cast, sub-titles, and dialog titles are all spoken from the film. No printed words appear on the screen for any purpose. The picture is an adaptation of Edgar Wallace's stage play, *The Terror*, popular for many years in England. The cast consists of Edward Everet Horton, May McAvoy, Alec Francis, Louise Fazenda, Holmes Herbert and John Miljean.

\* \* \*

William K. Howard's latest picture, *The River Pirate*, directed for the Fox Company, has won him a five-year contract with that company. *The River Pirate* is a worthy successor to his many previous picture achievements, notably *White Gold*, *Gigolo*, and *His Country*, and is destined to win him further recognition as one of Hollywood's most capable and artistic directors.

\* \* \*

Exclusive "stills" from the Biblical sequence of Warner Brothers' two-million-dollar cinema spectacle, *Noah's Ark*, directed by Michael Curtiz, appear in this issue. *Close Up* has the privilege of being first in the field to print scenes from this yet unfinished production, of which no other photographs have yet appeared. The leading roles are played by Dolores Costello and George O'Brien. Others in the cast include Noah Beery, Louise Fazenda, Nigel de Brulier, Guinn Williams, Anders Randolph, Armand Kaliz, Myrna Loy, William Mong and Malcolm Waite.

All of these actors play parts in both the deluvian and the modern sequences of the film. In the former, Miss Costello enacts the role of a fictitious character, Miriam, whom Noah's

## CLOSE UP

son Japheth, in the person of O'Brien, rescues from the flood and gives refuge in the ark.

Imagination is given free rein in this Noachian chapter of the picture story, and Curtiz here indulges himself in spectacular fancy and untrammelled fiction. The action takes place for the most part in and about a gigantic temple dedicated to idolatry and orgiastic rites, typifying the moral corruption which aroused the Lord's determination to destroy the world. The scenes of the flood overwhelming this temple and its thousands of worshippers are stupendously impressive, and accompanied, as they will be, by magnified sound effects, they present a spectacle of almost terrifying realism.

The picture is scheduled to be released the latter part of the year.

\* \* \*

*The Tell-Tale Heart*, a Hollywood film version of Poe's gruesome psychological story, was produced and directed by Charles F. Klein, with Leon Shamroy as cameraman and Otto Matiesen enacting the role of the madman of the story.

The picture, which is in two reels, is admirably done. Direction, acting and camera work unite perfectly in harmonising the film with the spirit and atmosphere of the weird tale of the madman who is driven to murder an inoffensive old man because of a vulture-like expression in one of his eyes, and whose heart-beat, as he is about to be killed, preys upon the mind of the murderer and compels him to reveal his crime after he has cunningly concealed the body and successfully overcome the suspicions of the law officers.

## CLOSE UP

*The Last Moment*, a film study in subjectivity, was produced in sympathetic collaboration by Paul Fejos as the director, Otto Matiesen as the actor, and Leon Shamroy as the cameraman—Hungary, Scandinavia, Russia, in a brotherhood of artistry.

The picture opens with a figure of a man (Matiesen) in Pierrot costume sinking from sight in the dark night waters of a lake. As his upraised hand disappears with a despairing gesture, a lone bubble comes to the surface of the water. Symbolic of the drowning man's final moment of life, the bubble dissolves into a rapid succession of coherent yet intermingled visions—life's panorama flashing in review before his mind's eye—the vicissitudinous career of a man ambitious to become a great actor, brought to a tragic close by the death of his wife and his subsequent suicide. Forty years compressed into sixty seconds. Five reels of celluloid crowded with a phantasmagoric onrush of events, incidents, tragedies, trivialities, loves, hates, impulses, emotions, thoughts—flashing, fading, dissolving. No uttered line or word. A film of dream-stuff.

The picture is one of Hollywood's most ambitious attempts at cinematic psychologic analysis and subjective treatment. None of its stills afford an adequate conception of it, for its values are essentially and peculiarly involved in motion, change, transition. Commercially, the film has won but scant success; but among the little theatres of the country it is receiving the appreciation it deserves as a signal example of the cinema's capabilities in the realm of impressionism.

C. H.



## CLOSE UP

We beg to call attention to an error in our June and July issues, in which the film *Danton* was announced in the Lubitsch advertisement as having been made by that director. Mr. Lubitsch's productions are as follows :—

- |     |                              |     |     |     |                      |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------|
| 1.  | <i>Gypsy Blood</i>           | ... | ... | ... | Berlin—Germany       |
| 2.  | <i>One Arabian Night</i>     | ... | ... | ..  | ..                   |
| 3.  | <i>Passion</i>               | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 4.  | <i>Deception</i>             | ... | ... | ... | " ..                 |
| 5.  | <i>Mountain Cat</i>          | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 6.  | <i>The Loves of Pharaoh</i>  | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 7.  | <i>Montmartre</i>            | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 8.  | <i>Rosita</i>                | ... | ... | ... | Hollywood—California |
| 9.  | <i>Marriage Circle</i>       | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 10. | <i>Three Women</i>           | ... | ... | ... | " ..                 |
| 11. | <i>Forbidden Paradise</i>    | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 12. | <i>Kiss Me Again</i>         | ... | ... | ... | " ..                 |
| 13. | <i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i> | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 14. | <i>So This Is Paris</i>      | ... | ... | ... | " ..                 |
| 15. | <i>Old Heidelberg</i>        | ... | ... | ... | " "                  |
| 16. | <i>The Patriot</i>           | ... | ... | ... | " ..                 |

## CLOSE UP

### BOOK REVIEWS

Two excellent textbooks for students interested in visual instruction have reached us from America. They are both published by the Educational Screen, 5, South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, at the price of a dollar each. A money order for this amount can be obtained easily at any post office, and the average amount of time taken to obtain the volumes if sent for from London would be just over a fortnight.

*Picture Values in Education*, by Weber, should be valuable to all who teach. Everything is explained carefully, there is a full description of some tests given with photographs, stereographs and magic lanterns, with some reference also to the cinema. The general results of these tests were found very favorable to the "film-aided" lesson as the pupils "understood it better and enjoyed it more". In some instances where the film was shown at the beginning of the lesson, learning capacity was increased by as much as fifty per cent. Four hundred and seventy-six voted on the method. The result was thirteen to one in favor of it. Forty per cent. of the children went to the cinema regularly outside lesson hours and others apparently never went at all. It is interesting to note that the results (with regard to the lesson) appeared to be the same with either set of children.

*Fundamentals in Visual Instruction*, by Johnson, contains much also of interest, including a very significant story that the Central Illinois Railway, finding their losses terrific owing to freight being improperly handled, showed a film to all the men they employed which depicted the right methods to handle it, and showed how it could be damaged if other methods were employed. It is said that they reduced their

## CLOSE UP

expenses through this film by over a million dollars.

Both these books deserve a place in the library of teachers and those interested in cinematography from an educational view point.

*Les documents internationaux de l'esprit nouveau, ciné poemes de B. Fondane avec 2 photos de Man Ray*, is a privately printed book, and is indicative of one side of the modern French feeling for the cinema. There are three "avant garde" scenarios, and the two photographs are well chosen. It is extremely difficult to judge a printed scenario, which must depend upon its realisation in pictures for its effects, but those who are in search of experimental scenarios from a fantastic angle will find these ciné poems worth their attention. The format and printing of the book are extremely tasteful and harmonious, and a real visual sense is apparent in the form of the three scenarios. We are unaware if the book is obtainable, but take this opportunity of thanking the author for allowing us an opportunity to read it.



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Directed by Henrik Galeen. Featuring Conrad Veidt, Werner Krauss & Elizza la Porte.

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